

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 SAM-01 SAB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01

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R 201330Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5281

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 0406

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS SY

SUBJ: ISRAEL HOLDS "WEEK OF SOLIDARITY WITH SYRIAN JEWRY"

REF: DAMASCUS 0017

1. AS PART OF ISRAEL'S CONTINUING CONCERN WITH SARG TREATMENT OF SYRIAN JEWRY, TWO UMBRELLA ORGANIZATIONS-- PUBLIC COMMITTEE FOR ARAB JEWRY AND NATIONAL UNION OF ISRAELI STUDENTS-- HAVE CONDUCTED A " SOLIDARITY WEEK" JANUARY 12-17 TO DRAMATIZE PLIGHT OF SMALL JEWISH COMMUNITY REMAINING IN SYRIA. MAIN EVENTS HAVE INCLUDED KNESSET DEBATE, AND RALLIES IN MAJOR CITIES AND UNIVERSITIES. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THERE HAVE BEEN COMPARABLE RALLIES THIS WEEK IN LONDON AND PARIS.

2. INFORMATION MINISTER YARIV, SPEAKING IN KNESSET JANUARY 15, CHARGED THAT SYRIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY LIVES IN " INHUMAN CONDITIONS, IN A POVERTY STRICKEN GHETTO, IN A STATE OF FEAR AND DISCRIMINATION". HE STATED THAT THERE IS A "TOTAL PROHIBITION OF EXIT FROM THE COUNTRY". TAKING NOTE OF WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS " HEAVY PRESSURE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE SYRIAN AUTHORITIES", YARIV SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN "SLIGHT RELAXATION ON MARGINAL ISSUES" BUT NO SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN SITUATION.

3. ACCORDING TO PRESS HEBREW UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT HARMON
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TOLD STUDENT RALLY THAT " CONDITION OF SYRIAN JEWRY PRESAGES THE

FORM OF THE SO-CALLED 'DEMOCRATIC AND SECULAR STATE' GLORIFIED BY ARAFAT". TEL AVIV MAYOR LAHAT SAID THAT MANY GOVERNMENTS DID NOT RAISE THEIR VOICES AGAINST OPPRESSION OF SYRIAN JEWRY OUT OF FEAR OF RETALIATION BY ARAB OIL NATIONS.

4. ACCORDING TO JERUSALEM POST, GOI AND COMMITTEE ACTIVISTS HAVE SHARP DIFFERENCES ABOUT MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF BRINGING ABOUT RELEASE OF SYRIAN JEWRY, WITH FORMER PREFERRING QUIET DIPLOMACY AND LATTER ADVOCATING CONTINUATION OF PUBLIC CAMPAIGN.

5. COMMENT. WE CANNOT DETERMINE WHETHER IMPROVEMENTS IN CONDITION OF SYRIAN JEWRY NOTED IN REFTEL ARE WHAT INFORMATION MINISTER YARIV HAS DESCRIBED AS " SLIGHT RELAZATION ON MARGINAL ISSUES". IN ANY CASE, ISRAELI PUBLIC CONTINUES TO HAVE TOTALLY NEGATIVE IMPRESSION, CONTRIBUTING TO ITS PROFOUND RELUCTANCE TO REGARD SYRIA AS COUNTRY PREPARED TO RECOGNIZE LEGITIMACY OF ISRAEL IN CONTEXT OF NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT.
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